

REMARKS

This submission is in response to the Official Action dated December 2, 2002.

Reconsideration of the above identified application, in view of the above amendments and the following remarks, is respectfully requested.

I. Status of the Claims

Claims 1-31 remain pending or which claims 1, 12, 19, 21, and 27 are the only independent claims. Claims 1-31 stand rejected. Claims 1, 8, 12, 19-21, 27 and 29-30 have been amended. The Background of the Invention and the Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments sections of the Specification have been amended for clarification purposes only. No new matter has been added.

II. Drawing Objections

The drawings stand objected to because the reference indicia 100, 150, and 200 were not mentioned in the written description. Applicant has amended the specification to include reference to such indicia.

The drawings further stand objected to because the reference indicia 300 was not depicted in the drawings. Applicant has amended Fig. 3 to include reference to such indicia. Applicant has filed concurrently herewith a Drawing Change Authorization Request.

In light of the amendments made, Applicant respectfully requests that the drawing objections be withdrawn. No new matter has been added as each of the amendments made find support either in the figures or the written description as originally filed.

III. Specification Objections

The specification stands objected to because it contains an embedded hyperlink or other such executable code. Applicant has amended the specification to delete such hyperlink.

In light of the amendments made, Applicant respectfully requests that the specification objection be withdrawn.

IV. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §112

Claim 1, 4, 8, 20, and 29-30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112 for the following reasons: (1) Claim 1 and 29-30 recite the term “continually” and Claim 20 recites the term “continuously” which the Examiner contends causes the claims to be indefinite because they then have no definitive termination point; (2) Claim 4 recites the term “the set of participants” for which the Examiner contends there is no antecedent basis; and (3) Claim 8 recites the term “the comparing step” for which there is no antecedent basis.

With respect to claims 1, 20, and 29-30, Applicant have eliminated references to “continually” and “continuously” and amended to the claims to more clearly define the invention. No new matter has been added and support for these claim amendments can be found on page 15, lines 7-17 of the specification as originally filed.

With respect to claim 4, Applicant respectfully directs the Examiner to claim 2, from which claim 4 depends, for the antecedent basis for the term “the set of participants.”

With respect to claim 8, Applicant has amended the dependency of claim 8 to claim 6. As such the term “the comparing step” finds antecedent support in claim 6.

In light of the amendments made and the above discussion, Applicant respectfully

requests that the claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112 be withdrawn.

V. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 12-13, 16-18, and 21-26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0072955 to Brock ("Brock").

Brock discloses an "online chat" focus group much like the prior art Greenfield Online and Harris Interactive approaches disclosed respectively on page 3, line 16 through page 4, line 4 and on page 4, lines 5-11 of the Specification as originally filed. However, unlike Greenfield Online and Harris Interactive, Brock goes one step further envisioning an audio/video focus group conducted over the Internet. (Brock, col. 10, ¶105.) However, Brock does not disclose in any level of detail how such a technique would be implemented and therefore is not an enabling disclosure to bar the rejected claims.

In any case, independent claims 12 and 21 have been amended to more clearly define the invention and distinguish over Brock. Support for these claim amendments can be found on page 15, lines 7-14 of the specification as originally filed. Amended claims 12 and 21 both recite a selection of candidates which at any one or more given times fits the predefined preference of a template, but which at the time certain optimally fits such preference. In other words, claims 12 and 21 recite a methodology and system for the continuous improvement in the selection of a market survey candidate pool. As time passes from the one or more given times to the time certain, the candidate pool is more finely tuned to the predetermined preference, chosen often times by the company sponsoring the market survey. Brock fails to teach or suggest such refinements in survey pools and so, respectfully, the rejection should be

withdrawn.

VI. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-9, 11, 14, 19-20, 27-31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable Brock in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0002482 to Thomas ("Thomas"). Claims 10 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over Brock in view of Thomas.

Brock in view of Thomas

In light of the amendments made to claims 1, 19, and 27, Brock can be distinguished on the same grounds as detailed above for claims 12 and 21.

Like Brock, Thomas teaches the "on-line" chat focus group method described in the Background of the Invention section of the Specification as originally filed. Unlike Brock, Thomas discloses in a bit more detail the method of distributing surveys to the participants in the focus group. (Thomas, Fig. 7). In Thomas, surveys are continuously distributed in step 710 until an adequate number of participants has received the survey. (Thomas, ¶71.) However, there is no refinement of the survey pool and hence no recognition of the methodology and system now claimed.

Independent claims 1, 19, and 27 have been amended to more clearly define the invention and to further distinguish over Thomas. Claims 1, 19, and 27 require a set of candidates which fit a predefined preference at one or more given times and a set of candidates which optimally fit the predefined preference at a time certain, which occurs after the given time. By continuously evaluating the candidate pool, the claimed invention ensures an optimal

candidate pool match at the time certain.

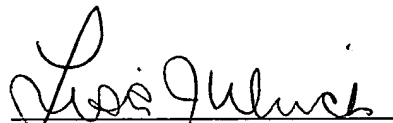
Neither Brock nor Thomas disclose the temporal component required by the independent claims. In Thomas, once the given number of candidates has been reached, all evaluation of the candidate pool stops. In the claimed invention, the evaluation continues no matter the number of candidates. In so doing, the claimed invention ensures that at the time certain the market research study has a set of candidates which optimally fits the predetermined criteria of the sponsoring company.

VII. Conclusion

Therefore, in view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicant contends that independent claims 1, 12, 19, 21, 27 are allowable and that the remaining claims which are dependent thereon are likewise allowable by virtue of their dependence on an allowable base claim. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejections against claims 1-31 and allow the case pass to issue.

Favorable action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa J. Ulrich
Registration No. 45,168
Attorney for Applicant

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DARBY & DARBY, P.C.
Post Office Box 5257
New York, NY 10150-5257
212-527-7700

MARK-UP AMENDMENT IN RESPONSE TO OFFICIAL ACTION

MAILED DECEMBER 2, 2003

Serial No. 09/883,590

In re application of: Renee FRENGUT

Filed: June 18, 2001

For: INTERNET BASED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD AND SYSTEM

IN THE WRITTEN DESCRIPTION

Please delete the paragraph which starts on line 1, page 3 and ends on line 15, page 3 and replace with the following:

A number of companies have attempted to replicate the qualitative research experience over the Internet. However, to date, prior art attempts have been unsuccessful. None of the Internet based market research studies have created a virtual market research study or a virtual communication facility. [Often times, the video stream is slow, the picture quality is poor, and] [m]More often than not the benefits of qualitative market research studies have been compromised. For example, many existing Internet based qualitative market research studies are conducted using on-line chat, whereby moderators and participants communicate through keystrokes. However, this question and answer format eliminates participant body language and facial expressions from the market research study. Another, prior art attempt involves taping a study in progress and transmitting the signal to the sponsoring client across the Internet or phone lines. One problem with this type of focus group is that participant and moderator travel costs and time are not alleviated. Participants still must travel to get to the focus group study and consequently middle to small town size participants will be at large absent from the study. Some examples of these Internet based prior art techniques include: greenfield online; harris interactive; and e-focus groups, each of which has a ".com" address,

and activegroup which has a “.net” address [www.greenfieldonline.com;
www.harrisinteractive.com; and www.activegroup.net; and www.e-focusgroups.com.]

Please delete the following three consecutive paragraphs: (1) the paragraph which starts on line 17, page 9 and ends on line 5, page 10 of the specification; (2) the paragraph which starts on line 6, page 10 and ends on line 18, page 10 of the specification; and, (3) the paragraph which starts on line 19, page 10 and ends on line 18, page 11 of the specification and replace with the following:

Figure 1a represents an exemplary flow diagram depicting the enrollment process for a general population sample 100 in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. In step 102, the potential candidate logs onto the Web site hosting the qualitative study. In step 104, the potential candidate enters demographic information such as, but not limited to, geographical location, profession, education, salary, age, gender, political affiliation, etc. In step 106, the potential candidate is trained so that the potential candidate is accustomed to the virtual focus group environment. For instance, one embodiment instructs the potential candidates on how market research studies are conducted and how each party participates. In step 108, follow-up potential candidate interviews are conducted on an as-needed basis should a sponsoring client wish to obtain further information in an effort to finalize the study's candidate pool.

Figure 1b represents an exemplary flow diagram depicting the enrollment processes for proprietary corporate/membership population samples 150 in accordance with one embodiment

of the present invention. In step 152, market research candidates are accumulated from various pre-existing databases such as, but not limited to, customer lists, subscriber membership lists, and Web site visitors. In step 154, the market research potential candidate pool is freshly solicited such as through e-mail, direct mail advertisements, and new Web site visitors all of whom are finally selected via a direct telephone call. In step 156, market research candidates who qualify for the participant pool are sent a participating package. This participating package includes an audio/video capturing device, software for conducting the virtual focus group, and instructions on how to use both the software and the audio/video sensing mechanism. In step 158, proprietary interviews are conducted amongst market research potential participants and the moderator. Should the sponsoring client request further information from a potential participant, they may communicate directly and privately to the moderator via a private chat screen for additional probing and/or follow-up proprietary interviews [are] can be conducted in step 162. [The proprietary follow-up interview environment conducted in step 162 generally consists of a one-on-one or group “chat room” setting.]

Figure 2 represents an exemplary flow diagram depicting the process involved in conducting a qualitative study 200 in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. In step 212, a market research study is initiated amongst the moderator, the candidates, and often an observing, sponsoring company. First, in step 214, the moderator logs onto the Web site hosting the particular market research study using a special market research ID and pass code. During the same time period, in step 202, the market research

candidates and participants log onto the Web site hosting the market research study with the participant's own market research ID and pass code. The market research participants comprise a reduced first portion of the set of candidates. After both the market research participants/candidates and moderator have logged on in steps 214 and 202, the moderator in step 208 is asked in step 208 whether or not the moderator wishes to conduct a preliminary interview with anyone. If so, in step 258 an interview is conducted. If not, the study continues with step 216. In step 216, both the moderator and the market research participants are presented with multiple screens in which audio/video images of the moderator and market research participants are displayed. While the moderator has an audio/video image of each market research participant, the market research participant has an audio/video image of themselves, the moderator, and [potentially even] audio/video images of other participants and their responses. In step 218, a stimulus which represents the product or service the sponsoring company wishes to evaluate is displayed to the participants by the moderator. The stimuli can be, but is not limited to, products, packaging, photos, concept statements, illustrations and/or commercials and full motion videos. After the market research participants are shown the stimulus in step 218, they are asked to submit responses to the stimulus in step 242. The responses are captured for analysis in a database and automatically e-mailed to the sponsoring clients with participant identification, providing the client with immediate feedback of the participants' responses.

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Once Amended) In a programmed computer, a method for dynamically selecting a set of candidates over a distributed computer network for inclusion in a market research group, comprising, the steps of:

- (a) acquiring market research data on potential candidates, the potential candidates connecting to the programmed computer across the distributed computer network;
- (b) evaluating the acquired market research data against a template;
- (c) selecting a set of candidates in response to the evaluating step, the set of candidates being fewer than the set of potential candidates and being selected to fit the template in accordance with a predefined preference;
- (d) permitting additional market research data from additional potential candidates to be acquired across the distributed computer network; and
- (e) repeating steps (b) through (d), so that
the permitting step [continually] acquires market research data until a time certain, the evaluating step [continually] evaluates the market research data at one or more given times which occur before the time certain, and the selecting step dynamically selects the set of candidates so as to [optimally] fit the predefined preference at [a] each given time and optimally fit the predefined preference at the time certain.

8. (Once Amended) The method as in claim [7] 6, wherein the comparing step is performed throughout the market research study to verify participant presence.

12. (Once Amended) A method for conducting a market research study from a host

machine over a distributed computer network, comprising, the steps of:

selecting a set of candidates to participate in a market research study, the set of candidates being fewer than all candidates and being selected so as to fit a predefined preference of a template at each of one or more given times and being selected so as to optimally fit the predefined preference at a time certain which occurs after the given times;

inviting [a] the set of candidates to [a] the market research study conducted during a predetermined time interval and conducted over a distributed computer network, wherein the candidates access the host using a respective user machine interface having an audio/video captive mechanism connected thereto;

initiating audio/video communication between the host and the user machines with at least a set of participants comprising a first portion of a set of candidates, during the predetermined time interval in substantially real time;

exhibiting a stimulus to the participants; and

accumulating participant responses to the stimulus over the distributed network at the host.

19. A system for dynamically choosing a market research group in accordance with a prescribed research directive of a market research study over a distributed computer network, the market research group having a set of candidates, comprising:

a potential candidate database filled with acquired market research data of the potential candidates;

a template populated with a predefined preference of potential candidates in accordance

with the prescribed research directive of the market research study; and

a processor evaluating the acquired market research data in accordance with the predefined preference so as to fit the predefined preference at each of one or more, given times and optimally selecting candidates in response to the evaluation at a time certain which occurs after the one or more given times.

20. (Once Amended) The system for dynamically choosing a market research group as in claim 19 wherein the potential candidate database [continuously] fills until the time certain and the processor [continuously] evaluates at each of the one or more given times, dynamically selecting the candidates to optimally fit the predefined preference at [a given] the time certain.

21. (Once Amended) A system for conducting a market research study over a distributed computer network, comprising:

a processor configured to select users to participate in a market research study at a given time in accordance with a predefined preference stored in a template and which at a time certain selects users in accordance with a best fit of the predefined preference to ensure an optimal set of users;

a moderator device having distributed computer network access, an audio/video recording mechanism, and an input mechanism wherein moderators submit stimulus to users selected by the processor across the distributed computer network;

a user device having distributed computer network access, an audio/video recording mechanism, and an input mechanism wherein users submit market research responses in

response to the moderator's submitted stimulus; and

a host machine communicating over the distributed computer network and having a database accumulating user responses to the moderator's submitted stimulus, a processor evaluating user responses, and an engine outputting market research results.

27. (Once Amended) In a programmed computer, a method for dynamically modifying a template used to select a set of candidates over a distributed computer network for inclusion in a market research group, comprising, the steps of:

- (a) acquiring template data concerning potential candidates;
- (b) modifying the template using the acquired template data;
- (c) evaluating the potential candidates against the modified template;
- (d) selecting a set of candidates in response to the evaluating step, the set of candidates being fewer than the set of potential candidates and being selected to fit the modified template; and

- (e) repeating steps (a)-(d) such that the selecting step dynamically selects the set of candidates that fit [optimally fits] the template at [a] one or more given times [time] in accordance with a predefined preference stored in a template and which at a time certain, which occurs after the one or more given times selects users in accordance with a best fit of the predefined preference to ensure an optimal set of candidates.

29. (Once Amended) A method as in claim 27, the potential candidates [continually] received over the distributed computer network until the time certain and used in the evaluating step.

30. (Once Amended) A method as in claim 28, the potential candidates [continually] received over the distributed computer network until the time certain and used in the evaluating step.